

Sacred Sites Of the Chumash Indians of California

Commentary from the writings of John M. Anderson
1999



IWIHINMU MOUNTAIN “The Chumash mountain of the center, a place of mystery. It is now called Pine Mountain by the Americans, and is located northwest of Los Angeles near Frazier Park.”

(The Chumash House of Fate, Anderson, 41)

LIYIKSHUP “The Chumash name for the sacred center of the human world. It is a place of peace.”

(A Chumash Christmas, Anderson, 37)¹

WOTOWOT LAKE A small but highly venerated lake located at the foot of Iwihinmu mountain. *Wotowot* means the place of the Wots, who were the highest leaders of the Chumash. This wetland was the primary mythological source of fertility in Chumashia, the wellspring of the waters of life for the Chumash people. American developers turned it into a golf course.²

TOSHOLOLO MOUNTAIN “The Chumash mountain of the east, associated with the Morning Star and the spring equinox. It is called Frazier mountain by the Americans, and is located northwest of Los Angeles and south of Frazier Park.”

(House of Fate, Anderson, 43)

WASNA MOUNTAIN “The Chumash mountain of the west, probably associated with the setting sun, the fall equinox. Wasna peak is located in the coastal mountains east of Santa Maria.”

(House of Fate, Anderson, 43)

WIMAT ISLAND The Chumash historian F. Kitsepawit identified Wimat as the ancient place of origin for the Chumash islanders.³

POINT CONCEPTION The Chumash call this site Humqaq and honor it as the place where the souls of the dead cleanse themselves before ascending into the heavens.

1 Note that Liyikshup is associated geographically with Iwihinmu mountain, but is ritually manifested anywhere that Chumash people reach visionary beauty (November 11, 1999).

2 This data was taken from Part II of Sacred Sites, which was placed on the internet in 2000: Expage.com/id/sacred 14.

3 Wimat was the economic center of ancient coastal Chumashia, supplying redwood for the vital plank boat industry. A canyon on the Pacific side of this influential island was held in religious esteem.

“Extensive erosion on Wimat, caused by Mexican and American occupation, has virtually destroyed the island aboriginal ecology and religious shrines” (The Fox Jumps, footnote 9; 1999 edition). Note that this edition also speculated that the Chumash venerated a ritual mountain of the south and that it might have been on Wimat island. Later research caused Anderson to reject the existence of a physical mountain of the south. The South “is associated with the stars of the southern sky and the Lower World” (Chumash Cosmology, Anderson, 101).

“Qilikutaywit described the souls of the dead cleansing themselves at the Humqaq pool, which was fed by a nearby fresh water spring”

(Kuta Teachings, Anderson, 25)

PAINTED ROCK This famous pictograph site is located on the Carrizo Plains, inland from the Stishni (San Luis Obispo) Chumash. Contemporary Chumash still visit this site, for annual ceremonies.

ZACA LAKE This small mountain lake served as a ‘portal’ into the heavens, used by spiritual leaders to visit the Path of the Dead.⁴ See *Jonjonata* (Anderson) for related information.

WORLD AXIS “The top of this axis lies at the apex of the sky, which is the North Star. Descending downward on the pivotal pole from the apex, one finds one’s self at the peak of the Chumash Central Mountain (called Iwihinmu).”
(A Circle Within the Abyss, Anderson, 39)

SENEQ MOUNTAIN A mountain located west of Santa Barbara, associated in Chumash mythology with *Asiqutc* (meaning ‘she who burns’ and presumably like the Santa Ana winds which caused widespread forest fires in Southern California.⁵

SCORPION WOMAN PEAK The eastern Chumash venerated this peak (called Escorpion by the Spanish) near their border with the Tongva people of San Fernando valley.⁶

XUTASH “The Sphere of *Xutash* is all of the physical world, as manifested by the Creator from the primordial Abyss. *Xutash* means the fruit, the flesh, of the physical world.”
(A Circle Within the Abyss, 39).

4 The Samala mythologist Qiliqutayiwit related a narrative about Zaca lake. It appears under the title “The Little Girl in Zaca Lake” (December’s Child, 282). [2020 note: It is not clear whether the soul of the drowned girl in this tale followed the traditional path of the dead. It is possible, since she drowned, that she was unable to travel on the same path as described in *Kuta Teachings* (Anderson). This path does not use Zaca lake as a portal into the supernatural. Rather the souls use Point Humqaq as a jumping off place, soaring west over the ocean to the portal of the setting sun.]

5 “Fire is the most pure of the four elements manifested in the newly created physical world” (Chumash Cosmology, 83; glossary citation).

6 This date taken from the second webpage in this series: expage.com/id/sacred 14.